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An analysis of self-esteem levels and parental attitudes of the students attending child development program

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyze the self-esteem levels and parental attitudes of students attending Child Development Program. The subjects were 127 students attending the first and second grades of this program. Study instruments included Personal Information Form, Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale and Parental Attitude Scale. Data were analyzed using One-Way ANOVA, T-Test, Tukey Test, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The analyses revealed that age is important on democratic attitude ($p < .01$) and protective-demanding attitude ($p < .001$); grade variable did not cause any significant difference on self-esteem, democratic, protective-demanding, and democratic attitudes ($p > .05$); and a correlation was found between students self-esteem levels and democratic (.001), authoritarian (.05), and protective-demanding attitudes (.01).

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Keywords: Students of child development program; self-esteem; democratic attitude; authoritarian attitude; protective-demanding attitude.

1. Introduction

The self concept comprises the individuals' judgments about himself. Self can be defined as the overall judgments of someone about the extent to which he owns various characteristics, i.e. it is the way someone perceives himself (Kuzgun, 1983). Whether the self concept or self image is appreciated and accepted forms the self-esteem. Self-esteem plays an important role in a healthy personality composition. Self begins developing as early as babyhood and lasts for a life time. All teachers, including those at the preschool education, are important in terms of developing the self-esteem in child. Therefore, it is expected of the teachers to understand and recognize the children, to have favorable communication with them by giving proper responses to their failures and avoiding humiliating words and behaviors, and to make them feel confident, thus offering a healthy model enabling the development of self-esteem (Yörükoğlu, 1996).

It is also known that parental attitudes are critical in the development of self-esteem as one of the fundamental determining factors of one's personality. It is an expected that parents with different child raising attitudes consequently raise children with different personalities (Güçray, 1989).

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An analysis of previous researches about self-esteem and parental attitudes reveal that the topics visited the most included level of communication in family, level of academic achievement, self-esteem education, emotional context, state of living with or without the family, harmony with peers, cognitive skills, physical ability, creativity, introversion, social support, decision making, coping with stress (Trusty *et al.*, 1994; Duru, 1995; Kemple *et al.*, 1996; Verschueren *et al.*, 1996; Baran, 1999; Berkem, 1999; Yalım, 2001; Avcıoğlu 2007, Saygın, 2008). In the literature review, no studies were found about self-esteem levels and parental attitudes of tertiary students studying child development. It is believed that educators who are up to work in the field of child development and take on serious responsibilities regarding the development of self-esteem among children should have high self-esteem in order to pose good role models while they are performing their job. With regard to the development of self-esteem, parents' behaviors towards the child play an important role in the formation of child's self concept and, in turn, affect the child's self-esteem. Therefore, the present study aims at analyzing the self-esteem levels and parental attitudes of students attending Child Development Program.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The population of the study comprises the students attending the child development program of vocational schools in Malatya, Turkey. The sample of the study consists of 127 students attending the first and second grades of Child Development Programs in Health Services Vocational Schools at İnönü University in Malatya and Pamukkale University in Denizli. Only the volunteering students were involved in the study.

2.2. Measures

Parental Attitude Scale- The perceived parental attitudes of the participants were measured using Parental Attitude Scale developed by Eldeleklioğlu (1996). The scale defines different parental attitudes using 40 items: Democratic (15 items), Protective/Demanding (15 items) and Authoritarian (10 items). This Likert type scale is graded between 1 and 5. Democratic, Protective/Demanding and Authoritarian attitude scores are calculated separately. The internal consistency coefficients and stability coefficients were estimated 0.89 and 0.92 respectively for Democratic subscale, 0.82, and 0.75 respectively for Protective/Demanding subscale; and 0.78 and 0.79 respectively for Authoritarian subscale.

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale- Originally developed by Coopersmith in 1967 in order to measure the self-esteem levels of the students and adapted into Turkish by Pişkin (1996) who made the validity and reliability studies, the short 25-item form of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale was used in this study. Scale was administered on 315 high school students (164 girls and 151 boys). Both KR-20 formula and split-halves method (internal consistency coefficient) were used to estimate the reliability coefficient of the test. In split-halves method, the test was divided into two as first and second halves, and Spearman Brown formula was administered. The internal consistency coefficients of first and second halves were .79 for girls and .74 for boys. The application of KR-20 formula on the short form of the scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .76. The participants are asked to respond to the items by checking either the "Yes" or "No" options. Participants are scored when they check certain items as "Yes" and certain items as "No". Only when these certain items are checked, participants are scored 4 (Four), otherwise they obtain 0 (Zero). Maximum and minimum available scores from the scale are 100 and 0, respectively. As the scores increase, the self-esteem levels of the participants also increase.

2.3. Procedure

Prior to the application, due legal permissions were granted from the directors of the relevant schools. During pre-determined periods, participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the study. The data were obtained through classroom-based administration of the instruments on the first and second grade students attending the concerning program during 2009–2010 academic year, which lasted about 30–35 minutes.

2.4. Data analysis

The analyses of the data that 127 students of Child Development Program obtained from Self-Esteem Scale, Parental Attitude Scale, and Personal Information Form were conducted using SPSS (Version 17.0) statistics software program. Participants' mean scores from Self-Esteem Scale and Parental Attitude Scale (Democratic, Protective-Demanding, Authoritarian subscales) were analyzed to detect the effect of age variable using one-way ANOVA for independent samples, while the effect of class variable was analyzed using independent samples t-test. The sources of the significant differences were tested using Tukey Test. The correlation between students' Self-Esteem and Parental Attitudes was tested using "Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Significance Test" (Büyüköztürk, 2005).

3. Results (Findings)

As it is seen in Table 1, the mean scores obtained from Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale by age variable were $X=68.83$ for students aged 18–20, $X=69.05$ for students aged 21–23, $X=73.92$ for students aged 24–26, and $X=76.36$ for students aged 27 or more. The Anova test results on the scores obtained from Coopersmith Self-esteem scale revealed no significant difference caused by age variable on self-esteem levels of the students ($F_{3,123}=1.18$; $p>.05$). It is remarkable that the Democratic Attitude scores of the students aged 18–20 ($\bar{X}=49.77$) and students aged 21–23 ($\bar{X}=51.47$) are lower than that score of the students aged 27 or more ($\bar{X}=63.81$). Anova test results show that students' age causes a significant difference between the mean scores they obtained from the Democratic Attitude Subscale of the Parental Attitude scale ($F_{3,123}=5.13$; $p<.01$). Significant difference is between students aged 18–20 and students aged 21–23, and students aged 27 or more. An analysis of the mean scores of the students from Protective-Demanding sub-scale in Table 1 show that mean scores of the students aged 18–20 ($\bar{X}=47.97$) and students aged 21–23 ($\bar{X}=49.00$) are higher than the mean scores of students aged 24–26 ($X=34.60$) and students aged 27 or more ($\bar{X}=33.45$). It was found that there is a significant difference between students Protective-Demanding Attitude scores in terms of their ages ($F_{3,123}=9.34$; $p<.001$), whereas no significant difference was found between Authoritarian attitude scores in terms of students' ages ($F_{3,123}=.16$; $p>.05$). The significant difference regarding the Protective-Demanding attitude subscale was found to be between students aged 24–26 and students aged 27 or more, and students aged 18–20; and between students aged 24–26 and students aged 27 or more, and students aged 21–23.

Table 1. Means and Standart Deviations of the scores from Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale and Democratic, Protective-Demanding, Authoritarian Parental Attitudes Scale according to students' age

Students aged		Self		Democratic Attitude		Protective-Demanding Attitude		Authoritarian Attitude	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
18-20	72	68.83	16.44	49.77	11.98	47.97	11.73	15.77	7.34
21-23	19	69.05	16.37	51.47	10.40	49.00	19.73	17.05	9.23
24-26	25	73.92	16.08	56.56	15.57	34.60	11.35	15.64	7.18
27 or more	11	76.36	11.65	63.81	9.88	33.45	14.90	15.90	5.50

It is shown in Table 2 that first graders' mean score from Coopersmith Self-esteem Scale is $X=70.62$, while second graders' mean score is $\bar{X}=70.40$. The results of the t test revealed that the grade of the students does not cause any significant difference on their scores from Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale [$t(125)=.079$, $p>.05$]. An analysis of the table show that first graders' mean score from the Democratic Parental Attitude subscale is $\bar{X}=51.53$, while that of second graders is $X=53.75$; first graders' mean score from the Protective-Demanding Parental Attitude subscale is $X=44.17$, while that of second graders is $\bar{X}=44.30$; and finally first graders' mean scores from the Authoritarian Parental Attitude Subscale is $X=16.68$, while that of second graders is $\bar{X}=15.13$. It was found out that the grade of the students does not cause a statistically significant difference on their Democratic [$t(125)=.955$, $p>.05$], Protective-Demanding [$t(125)=.045$, $p>.05$] and Authoritarian [$t(125)=1.197$, $p>.05$] parental attitude scores.

Table 2. Means and Standart Deviations of the scores from Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale and Democratic, Protective-Demanding, Authoritarian Parental Attitudes Scale according to grade variable

Grade	n	Self-esteem		Democratic Attitude		Protective-Demanding Attitude		Authoritarian Attitude	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
First grade	67	70.62	16.17	51.53	12.78	44.17	12.10	16.68	8.27
Second grade	60	70.40	16.07	53.75	13.26	44.30	17.20	15.13	6.29

As it is seen in Table 3, statistically significant correlations were found between students' self-esteem scores and their Democratic ($p < .001$), Protective-Demanding ($p < .05$) and Authoritarian ($p < .01$) parental attitude scores.

Table 3. Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Significance Test regarding Students' Scores from Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale and Democratic, Protective-Demanding, Authoritarian Parental Attitude Scale

PARENTAL ATTITUDE	SELF-ESTEEM
DEMOCRATIC	.383
PROTECTIVE-DEMANDING	-.227
AUTHORITARIAN	-.264

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that students' self-esteem does not differ significantly according to their age. Güçray (1989) and Yüksekaya (1995) also found in their researches that age was not effective. Development of self is a life-long process regardless of age. Given that fact, the present finding about the lack of a significant difference between self-esteem scores by age can be considered as normal. In the present study, also it was found that students' age caused a significant difference on their Democratic and Protective-demanding parental attitude scores, but not on their authoritarian parental attitude scores. Democratic parents love their children sincerely and deeply, which they unconditionally show to their children. They meet all of their child's needs with due attention and understanding. They encourage their children to take some decisions according to their age, which helps the development of their self-esteem. A child who is able to make decisions freely about himself is likely to develop as an individual with higher self-esteem compared to his peers who are either raised with a protective approach and exaggerated love, or raised with strict and oppressive attitudes. It is observed that, compared to families with Democratic and Protective-Demanding child raising attitudes, especially authoritarian families struggle to raise their children as a very young adult who fits into the authoritarian parents' definition of an ideal person. Therefore, students' age might have caused a significant difference on Democratic and Protective-demanding parental attitude scores.

No significant difference was found between either students' self-esteem scores or Democratic, Protective-demanding and authoritarian parental attitude scores according to grade variable. The participants attend a two-year program. Therefore, it can be considered as predictable that self-esteem and parental attitudes are not affected by grade level.

Finally, the results of the study showed that there are significant correlations between students' level of self-esteem and their perceived parental attitude scores. Similar researches analyzing the relationship between parental attitudes and self show a consensus with the present study (Duru, 1995; Candemir, 2000; Kernis *et al.*, 2000; Warash *et al.*, 2001; Yıldız Bıçakçı, 2004). Children are first educated by their parents, and parental attitudes towards the child can affect his/her self-perception either positively or negatively (Nazik, 2001; Uyanık Balat, 2003). Güçray (1989) and Yavuzer (1996) argue, too, that parental attitudes are critical in the development of self-esteem as one of the fundamental determining factors of one's personality.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

As a result of the study, it was found that while students' age does not cause a difference on their self-esteem levels ($p > .05$), it causes a difference on Democratic attitude significantly at .01 level and on Protective-Demanding

attitude significantly at .001 level, but not on authoritarian attitude ($p>.05$). Also, it was found that students' grade level does not cause a significant difference on their self-esteem level, Democratic, Protective-Demanding and Authoritarian parental attitude levels ($p>.05$). It was found as a result of the Correlation Coefficient Significance test that there are significant correlations between students self-esteem levels and their Democratic ($p<.001$), Protective-Demanding ($p<.05$) and Authoritarian ($p<.01$) parental attitudes.

In light of the findings following can be suggested: Training programs can be developed with the aim of positively supporting the self-esteem levels and parental attitudes of students attending the Child Development Program, and the efficacy of these programs can be evaluated. The correlation between the perceived parental attitudes of the students attending Child Development Program and their parents' actual child raising attitudes can be analyzed. University students' rate of utilizing the counseling and guidance services can be increased.

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